

EXTRAORDINARY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 21 November 2016 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor David Saunders (Chairman); Councillors G Coleman-Cooke, Campbell, Connor, Curran, Dennis, Dexter, Dixon, Falcon, Grove, Jaye-Jones, Martin, Parsons and Rusiecki

In Attendance: Councillors: Buckley, K Coleman-Cooke, Crow-Brown, J Fairbrass, L Fairbrass, Partington, L Potts, R Potts, M Saunders, Savage, Shonk, Tomlinson and Townend

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Bambridge, substituted by Councillor Bayford.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

76. THANET LOCAL PLAN - CONSULTATION

Councillor D. Saunders, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel invited Mr David Stevens to address the Panel. Mr Stevens made his submissions after which the Chairman called upon Councillor Wells, Leader of Council to present the main issues for debate. Councillor Wells introduced the report by initially advised the meeting on a number of amendments to the report. These changes have been attached as Annex 1 to this minute item.

Councillor Wells said that the Local Plan was a statutory document that had to be evidence based and would be assessed by an independent Planning Inspector against a set of government guidelines. The plan would support the key strategies of the Council's corporate priorities in particular as it relates to housing, workforce, infrastructure development and inward investment.

The draft Plan was linked to the public consultation that was conducted on the 'Preferred Options' in January 2015. Key changes that were made as a result that consultation were as follows:

- The identity of additional sites to meet the increased housing requirements;
- The Council's current evidence on the future of the Manston Airport site;
- Identification of key road schemes to be provided alongside development;
- To invite proposals for sites to be considered as local green space;
- Amended location for the proposed Thanet Parkway Station;
- Proposals for adopting new national technical standards for water efficiency, internal space, accessible and adaptable accommodation.

As part of finalising the plan, a sustainability appraisal & strategic, environmental assessment & habitat regulations assessment, draft infrastructure delivery plan and local green space would also be subject to the same public consultation. Councillor Wells said that the Thanet joint transportation strategy would be developed by Thanet District Council and Kent County Council and be subject to a separate report and a later public consultation.

Councillor Wells advised Members that the future of the airport was important. However that it should be noted that the alternative to foregoing the brown fields linked to the airport for housing development would lead to 180 acres of green fields being required for housing development in the district.

Although the draft Plan highlighted the development of 17,140 houses during the Plan period; the existing planning permissions, completed development, windfalls and empty homes accounted for some 7,840 homes, leaving a need for 9,300 homes in this draft Plan.

In concluding his presentation, the Leader then requested the Panel to agree the recommendations in the officer report which were as indicated below:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommends to Cabinet that the proposed revisions to the draft Local Plan, and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitat Regulations assessment reports, be agreed for consultation purposes for a period of 6 weeks; and
2. That Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommend to Cabinet that the appropriate amendments to the Local Development Scheme be agreed.

In response to the submissions by the Leader of Council, Members of the Panel made the following comments:

- Expressed concern that the Panel was not given enough time to study the report which was significantly larger than most reports that were usually presented to the Panel for review;
- Manston airport site ought to be reflected as an important part of the draft Local Plan;
- Amount of consideration for alternative use of Manston Airport site other than housing development in the proposals had been minimal;
- The Panel could establish a working party to review the draft Local Plan in more detail by looking at key issues and contribute to the consultation process;
- The draft Local Plan should not only refer to the views from the Avia Report but to all the reports that had been produced in relation to Manston Airport;
- Suggested that Cabinet give the Panel more time to study the draft proposals;
- The Plan should address what the district had lost;
- The Plan should be linked to the Neighbourhood Plans;
- Proposals should view Ramsgate Port as a marina;
- TDC should look for an investor who had a view for an airport;
- If the Development Consent Order (DCO) was successful and yet Council did not have a provision for the airport in the Plan, how would Council respond to that development;
- Is Council going to re-look at the rejected sites;
- Cabinet should be mindful of the top grade agricultural land in places like Birchington which should be spared from use as housing development land if more appropriate land could be identified elsewhere.

In response Councillor Wells made the following comments:

- Soft market testing had been conducted for Manston Airport but no satisfactory evidence had been submitted by potential investors to show that Manston Airport site could be run as a viable business;
- If there was evidence that there was an investor for a passenger air service, then Council would consider them;
- If there wasn't such evidence, then Council would need to consider other uses/mixed use for the airport site;

- The decision relating to the airport was not an easy one to make but Council had to make such a decision based on evidence;
- The Local Plan was supposed to have been in place since 2011;
- It was reasonable proposals that OSP could ask Cabinet to could look again at the list of rejected sites if necessary to determine if these could be included in proposed sites for housing development.

Adrian Verrall, Strategic Planning Manager advised the meeting that if the DCO was approved, it would take precedence over the Plan provisions as they relate to the Airport.

One Member suggested that the Panel returned the draft Local Plan to Cabinet with no comment because by recommending the draft Local Plan to Cabinet, the Panel would have in a way demonstrated that they had enough time to review the proposals; which according to the Member, the Panel did not have. Some Members agreed with the spirit of the proposal whilst others felt that adopting such a recommendation would be a missed opportunity for the Panel to influence the draft Plan that was due to go out to public consultation.

Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager advised that the Panel could debate referring the draft Plan to Cabinet without comment. However if that proposal was adopted by the Panel, it would in effect mean that the Panel could no longer proceed thereafter to review the draft Plan any further.

Another Member suggested setting up a working party for the Panel to review in depth the draft Local Plan.

The Chairman reassured Members that the Panel would have opportunities to review the draft Local Plan during the consultation period and could create a working party to carry out more in-depth study of the proposals if that was the Panel's wish. However this should be done in the context of resources available to the Panel and might require Members to re-prioritise the work of the Panel.

A Member raised the concern that RiverOak had publicly alleged that the Council had not responded to correspondence.

The Member then suggested that this be dealt with as a formal complaint and should be investigated.

In response Madeline Homer, CEx made the following comments:

- CEx not aware that the Council is aware that RiverOak submitted correspondence in June 2016;
- Council would welcome the opportunity to be consulted by RiverOak as part of the DCO process and we understand that they are obliged to consult the council;
- Would encourage RiverOak to contact CEx with their consultation plans and any supporting evidence they have as soon as it is available;
- With regards to the deferral of the Lothian and Shelf Appeals, the council copied RiverOak into all its correspondence with the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Inspectorate have kept them informed in the same fashion;
- Given this transparency, it was not clear what information from either the council or Planning Inspectorate was still outstanding;
- CEx wrote to RiverOak solicitors on 02 November regarding the Local Plan consultation timetable and process;
- If this information was not passed on, a copy of the letter is available on the TDC website;
- The same information was provided to the RiverOak's planning consultants on 12 October which provided the same information;

- In the meantime the council's planning team dealt with numerous emails and telephone calls with RiverOak consultants over the last 6 months;
- Whilst the email sent by RiverOak on 27 October has not been responded to because it related to matters still under consideration and CEx understands that the issue had now been resolved.

In summing up debate on the matter, the Chairman said that Members will have an opportunity to review the proposals in-depth during the consultation period. He then requested that the Panel finalises on the recommendations for the night.

Councillor Bayford proposed and Councillor Curran seconded that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel forward the draft Local Plan to Cabinet without comment due to the inadequate time given to the Panel to review the proposals.

When put to vote the recommendation was LOST.

Councillor Jaye-Jones proposed, Councillor Glenn Coleman-Cooke seconded and when put to vote Members AGREED the following that Cabinet:

1. Includes specific recommendations in the consultation that underline the inclusion of potential aviation use as part of a mixed use scenario;
2. Should explicitly explain that evidence produced during the coming phases of consultation can still be considered between now and examination in public.

Councillor Rusiecki proposed that the RiverOak complaint be treated as a formal complaint. However the Member was advised by the CEx that if they wished for the issue to be treated as a formal complaint then he would need to write to the CEx making that request. The CEx would then consider the request.

Councillor Rusiecki proposed, Councillor Glenn Coleman-Cooke seconded and Members AGREED that further a further review be conducted of the rejected list to find extra space for housing development in order to minimise the use of green fields.

77. BUDGET STRATEGY 2017/18

Tim Willis, Director of Corporate Resources introduced the report for debate. Mr Willis advised Members that Cabinet had considered the report at their meeting on 17 November 2016 and approved the budget strategy as the basis for setting out the budget proposals submitted to Full Council on 01 December 2016.

One member thanked Mr Willis for conducting one to one Member briefings on the budget, which helped Members understand the budget strategy proposals before they were put before Cabinet. Another Member asked whether the Council liabilities (£250k) that had arisen as a result of the court case brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on 18 November would negatively impact on the reserves. In response Mr Willis said that there would be no impact as such costs had been provided for separately.

There being no specific recommendations to make to Cabinet, Members noted the report.

78. FEES AND CHARGES 2017/18

The Panel considered the fees and charges schedule that had been recommended to Full Council by Cabinet. Mr Willis advised that on page 1105 of the agenda pack, the item on 'events/commercial enterprises' percentage should read 75% and not 50%.'

One Member noted that the budget had assumed that Ramsgate Town Council would continue the financial arrangement for a further year which would see free car parking on Saturdays at Leopold Street Car Park. The Member then suggested that it would be a good idea for Thanet District Council to put a press statement on the website acknowledging that arrangement.

Another Member asked why the Council was intending to charge residents for household waste bin replacement and not for the replacement of green (recycling) bins. In response, Madeline Homer, CEx responded, that it was in order to create some incentives for residents to recycle. Officers were going to check and provide a fuller response outside the meeting.

However a member of the Panel advised that residents had to obtain a green bin, hence there was no requirement to pay for the replacements thereafter. Members also said that they hoped that a proper review had been undertaken to the proposed schedule of fees & charges for 2017/18.

There being no specific recommendations to make to Cabinet, Members noted the report.

79. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Mr Willis led the discussion on this item and reported that the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme had been recommended to Full Council for adoption by Cabinet. It was also reported that government funding of the scheme had been reduced and Council had had to top it up over the years. Although proposals to the scheme would see reductions being introduced, it would still be one of the most generous in the county.

Council would also be considering for adoption in the near future, a Hardship Scheme to support those families that would have been affected most by the changes to the proposed Council Tax Scheme. A Member of the Panel suggested that the details of the Hardship Scheme be brought to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel, before finalisation by Council.

Members requested for clear definitions to the key issues in the hardship scheme. In response Mr Willis advised Members that the Hardship Scheme would need to be in place by 1 April 2017. The proposed scheme would be similar to the one adopted by Canterbury City Council and Dover District Council.

There being no specific recommendations to make to Cabinet, Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.45 pm